

July 2016

Issue 12

THE SPECTRUM SHOW

Magazine

MAKING DEEP CORE RAIDER STEP BY STEP

MAGAZINE FRENZY PART TWO OF OUR FEATURE

FLASHBACK 86

GAME REVIEWS

HARDWARE

SPECIAL FEATURES



Includes material
not in the video
show!

THE WRITE STUFF
Professional grade word
processor reviewed.



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Welcome to issue twelve and thank you for taking the time to download and read it.

The big news since the last issue is the announcement of the Spectrum Next. A modern version of our beloved micro brought bang up to date with all the features we have been eager to get.

There have been several attempts at this, none really producing a complete, all in one solution. The Vega gave us a plug-and-play game pad with options for additional games to be loaded, but had it's short comings. No real keyboard, composite out and no ability for peripherals like a mouse or keyboard.

The re-created ZX Spectrum gave us a nice case, but was then tied down to IOS apps and was the focus of underhand practices by the company.

What fans always said they wanted was a mixture of them both but with more modern architecture such as HDMI, SD cards, more ram and possibly more graphics modes. The Spectrum Next seems to tick all of these boxes.



From the current project page the machine will contain a Z80 processor capable of running at 3.5Mhz (the same speed as a normal Speccy) and a turbo mode of 7mhz. It will contain 512mb of memory, have a built in divMMC for SD cards, AY sound, a joystick port and an interface port that will be compatible with most original add-ons. All of this and more wrapped up in a gorgeous looking keyboard designed by the original Spectrum designer, Rick Dickinson.

I am eagerly awaiting more news on this project and hope it reaches completion with the production of the promised units. A modern machine with good specifications that is also backward compatible with the old hardware is something us Speccy fans have been waiting for since Sir Clive sold the company.

The next series of the Spectrum Show has now begun with ten more episodes coming your way over the next 10 months.

There is a good mix of planned content, but because of the uncertainty of delivery dates, and the schedules of life, not all features are written in stone. I hope to bring you a review of the Vega Plus if it turns up, and also want to report from Replay Expo Manchester later in the year.

The Vega Plus seems to be going through a bit of a rough patch at the moment, with the company being re-structured due to several partners leaving, including the main technical person. There have been a lot of conjecture on this subject, but it is not something I will dwell on. I just hope things get sorted out and that the device is produced and delivered ready to review.

I notice that the company have also just announced brand new firmware for both the Vega and the Vega Plus. Again I presume this is linked with the recent split, as they claim it is completely new. I await the release to see just what they have done with it.

Just as I was about to publish this issue, I got my hands on a vintage 486 laptop. You may have seen the pictures on my Twitter page. It's fully working and the next thing for me to do was get a Spectrum emulator running on it. My attempts can be viewed in episode 52 of the show and possibly in a future issue of this magazine.

It's great to use this old hardware, something I used back when it was new. In those days a 486 DX2 laptop running at 40Mhz was super cool. Now my phone has more power and storage!

Enjoy this issue.

AMSTRAD'S NEW MACHINE

There are rumours that when Amstrad releases their first Spectrum later this year, it will come with a few new additions. It is thought they will upgrade the memory to 256k and also include a card slot to be able to use credit-card sized storage devices.

This may help to kickstart the development companies, who are currently holding back work until they find out what Amstrad plan to do. Several companies have put 128k games on hold and Melbourne House say they have shelved Rock N Wrestle all together.

It is important for Amstrad to get the first machine out as soon as they can to try and keep the software companies from looking elsewhere.

QL2 FIGHT

With the recent Sinclair buy-outs and all the problems associated with it, the QL was destined to be left behind in the dusty cupboard of history, as Amstrad seemed uninterested in this computer.



However, it could be saved by a consortium of buyers that want to purchase the rights to the machine so they can continue development of the rumoured QL 2.

The QL 2 is said to have a full 68000 processor, 640k ram and an internal 3.5 inch disc drive.

The full details were announce at the ZX Microfair with two companies showing promise. A company called CST demonstrating their upgraded QL. The machine, named Thor, was a standard QL with various upgrades and a detachable keyboard. They also plan to release a 68020 version by September.

The machine has an external 3.5inch disc drive holding 720k and it had the connectivity for a 20mb Winchester hard drive.

The other company was Care Electronics also showing there model. It contained the standard 68000 processor and built-in disc drive. This though was not an upgraded QL but a QL compatible machine. Care hope to begin production as soon as they get backing.

LEVEL 9 GAMES

Level 9, the producers of adventure games have entered into an agreement with Rainbird Software, part of British Telecom, to produce three new titles across ten different computers, to be sold under their label.

The deal will not affect Level 9 who will continue to publish games under its own familiar label.

IMPORT EXPORT

With the news of Sinclair buyout still a hot subject, the after affects are still being felt, and Amstrad have wasted no time in dumping huge amounts of old stock into the hands of exporters.



Their aim is to clear out the older micos to prepare the way for its new range, but this leaves a lot of worried Spectrum owners around.

20,000 QLs, 17,000 48k Spectrums and 14,000 16k Spectrums have been sold to PST, an export company, leaving just the 48k Plus and Spectrum 128k behind.

On the flip side, the company responsible for selling the Brazilian clone built my Micro Digital, the TK-90X, which was mentioned in a previous issue, is thinking about now importing these machines into the UK to fill the gaps left by Amstrad's exporting deal.

MICRO SHOOTOUT

Comparing other micro computers of the time, against the Sinclair Spectrum.

Jupiter Ace

Memory	51kb (with expansion)
Screen Size	24 x 32
Resolution	256 x 192
CPU	Z80 @ 3.25Mhz
Colours	Black and white.
Sound	1 bit beeper.
Joystick	Via third party adapter.
Connections	Tape in/out.
Games	<150
Avg Price	£90.00



ZX Spectrum

Memory	48kb
Screen Size	22 x 32
Resolution	256 x 192
CPU	Z80 @ 3.5 Mhz
Colours	8 + 7 bright
Sound	1 bit beeper
Joystick	Via third party adapter.
Connections	Tape In/Out.
Games	> 20,000
Avg Price	£175.00



Conclusion

The Jupiter Ace could be considered a ZX81 rival rather than a Spectrum rival, but it was released at the same time as the Sinclair machine and held itself up as an alternative offering.

Looking through the specifications you can see it is closely matched to the Spectrum in almost every way until you reach the graphics. Here the Jupiter only offers black and white, which is no match for the Speccy. The keyboard was very similar, as was the expansion options and sound, and coming in cheaper than the Spectrum, it could have been a contender had it not been for the lack of colour.

The very limited range of games on offer also meant it did not stand a chance, with Sinclair's machine racing away as companies flocked to the colourful display on offer.

GAME REVIEWS



In late 1983, an unknown company started to advertise a game called Zaxxon for the Spectrum. Obviously a clone of the popular arcade game Zaxxon, this was the first conversion, unofficial or otherwise for the Spectrum and gamers clambered to grab a copy.

There wasn't a story on the inlay and the few words in the game basically directs you to destroy everything. Anyone seeing or playing the arcade game though, would know what to expect.

The screen angle is different from the arcade version, displaying the game at a 45 degree angle rather than the arcade which used much less. This gives the game a strange look but I guess it was done to help scrolling and avoid colour issues.

Your craft casts a shadow which is used to define height and position, but is tricky to keep an eye on when the screen gets busy, and it soon does. There are walls of varying height to avoid, enemy ships and rockets. If that wasn't enough to worry about, you also have a fuel limit, and to replenish it you have to destroy the fuel tanks.

Because of the angle it is really difficult to judge just where you are, and often crash into rockets or walls because you misjudge things.

The scrolling is in eight character jumps, moving down and left one square, which looks awkward, but at least maintains attributes, so we get a colourful game.

Control is good, with options for keyboard or joystick, but no option to reverse the up/down control, so to fly lower you have to push up on the joystick. Some users do not like this option.

Sound is used quite well, with various affects for firing and ex-



plosions.

Static screenshots look good, but the jerky movement coupled with the positioning problem means it's difficult to make any real progress. The rockets are a real pain to avoid too.

So overall then a brave attempt to recreate a classic arcade game that just falls short.

FIREBIRDS

Softek 1983



Firebirds, as you can probably guess, is a good old fashioned shoot-em-up. The game is obviously trying to emulate the arcade game Pheonix, but with a slightly changed format to avoid any possible problems with lawyers.

The first level consists of a swirling pack of red birds that occasionally drop bombs. These move around the screen after a set amount of time, and can sometimes cause problems if they happen to swarm near the bottom. Once you clear these, an additional blue bird enters the fight, as well as another batch of those red swirling birds.

The blue alien thing moves in a figure of eight, dropping bombs. Occasionally it will stop and fire a laser straight down. Hitting this involves timing your shot to meet the alien on it's figure of 8 path. If you get past this, we get dropping large white aliens. These are easy to hit, but with the red birds and the blue alien still floating about, things soon get tight.

Once past this and we get the finale, the mother ship. This huge graphic slowly scrolls down from the top of the screen, protected by more swarming aliens. As with Pheonix you have to blast a hole through the lower rotating shield and try to get a shot into the heart of the ship.

The graphics are smooth but lack much animation. In this type of game that really doesn't matter much as the action is fast enough for you not to notice.

Sound is good too with some really nice effects for the introduction and in-game noise.

Difficulty is about average I think, and if you get a good run of the aliens not swarming in difficult places, you should be able to get to the final level quite easily. The last level is tricky, but not overly tough and you feel you've achieved something if you blow up the mothership.

It's a simple game but does have some variety with the different aliens, and I like to load this up now and again for a quick blast.

It wasn't until later when games like Pheenix from Megadodo and Moon Cresta from Incentive came along that we got anything close to this.

Give it try if you're a fan of shoot-em-ups.. you might just like it...

GAME REVIEWS



Palace Software 1985

Playing the role of a witch, or as some parts of the game call it, a hag, you have to rid the land of the evil Pumpkin and at the same time get hold of the golden broomstick. To do this you have to collect six ingredients and place them in your cauldron to make the spell required. The six ingredients are all placed underground and to get to them you have to first find the correct coloured keys.

You control the hag that can walk or fly, and which method you choose will depend on where you are in the game. Initially you will fly, avoiding the various things that buzz about, often heading straight towards you. You can shoot them, but this uses up precious magic so it's best to just try and avoid them.

As you fly around, the screen moves along in a kind of cross between flip screen and push scrolling, the action pauses while this happens too.

Once you spot a key on the ground you drop down and land in the clearings, these are the only places you can land.

Then you grab the key and head off looking for other keys or the door of the same colour as the key. Once located, you can land and head into the underworld looking for ingredients. Here the game style changes to a platform game.

Your hag has to jump around, avoid the nasties and try to locate one of the ingredients, which will be flashing. These sections caused me problems for many reasons.

Firstly they are just too hit and miss, the collision detection and platform placement means it all too easy to die quickly.

Secondly you often have to jump from one screen to the next, and land on a platform you can't initially see, so unless you know the game map, this is a mainly guess work.



SCORE
OOOOOO
MAGIC
99%

HAGS
///



Thirdly, some walls can be walked through, like the large pillars, but there is no indication this is possible, so again, unless you have the map, it's all down to guess work.

All of this proved to be too much to enjoy the game and eventually, after several hours of getting nowhere, I had to revert to watching the RZX playback.

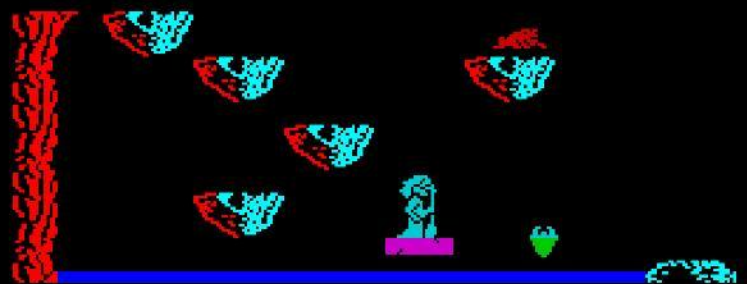
Colliding with anything will lower you magic and once it reaches zero, you lose a hag. You have 8 to start with, but these soon start to drop as you collide with the nasties.

Because the evil creatures that home in on the powerless hag whilst walking and the guess work of the caves, this game is very tricky, and I struggled to get very far. A map would make things easier, and watching the RZX it is certainly required if you want to avoid your hag plummeting to her death.

The graphics are large and well-drawn and move smoothly but the sound is a bit of a let-down, and for the most part you will be playing in silence. There are a few zap sounds when you kill a nasties or your hag dies, but that's all.

There are long sections of just flying about, which can become tedious, especially as its in silence.

One thing that also puzzled me; you can collect other items that are not ingredients but show up in the scrolls



at the top of the screen. I have no idea what they are!

Overall then, a nice looking game that does have huge problems with blind jumping and collisions with platforms, but worth trying out if you like this style of game, but be warned – it's not easy!



The Making Of

DEEP CORE RAIDER



It is always difficult coming up with new ideas for games, or new twists to existing genres that make that little bit of difference. Inspiration can come from many varied and often strange things. The idea for Imagine's Molar Maul was, for example, inspired by a visit to the dentist.

Deep Core Raiders inspiration came from a more normal source, a type in game called Outlander. This BASIC game, first listed in Popular Computing Weekly in February 1983, was a typical example of a type in game. The graphics moved on 8 pixel jumps, the sound was bland and the control was hit and miss. It was however, something a little different from the usual Space Invader or Pacman clones usually found in the pages of magazines.

SCORE : -25

HIGH SCORE : 0



FUEL : 188

The game was simple, bomb the alien bases and land within a fuel limit.

My original plan was to remake the game getting as close as possible to the original. I wanted to add extra levels, different aliens and a few moving aliens to add extra zest. This would have all been possible using my tool of choice, Arcade Games Designer, but for one small problem, the sprite sizes.

The original BASIC game used 8x8 pixel User Definable Graphics, AGD uses 16x16 pixels sprites. With these larger sprites, the play area would have to be effectively doubled to get the same experience, this of course was not possible without scrolling. AGD does not provide scrolling.

I attempted to make the game using the screen estate available, but there was just not enough space to allow for a lot of enemies or manoeuvring space, which was the essence of the original.

A re-think was in order

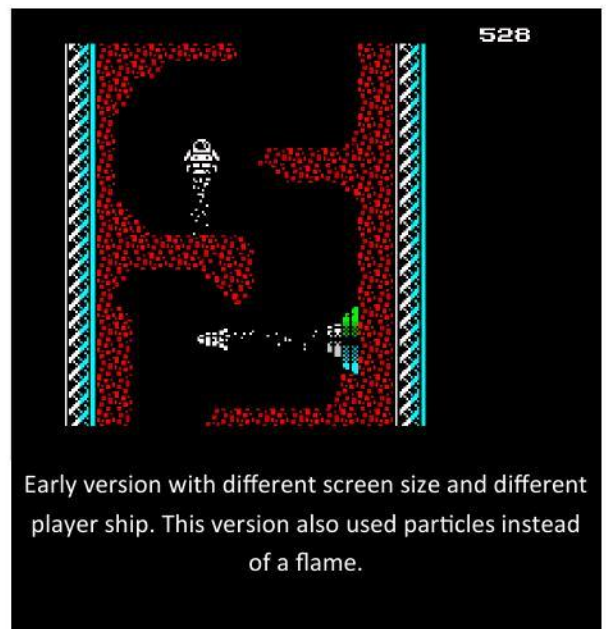
A re-think was in order, and my next inspiration was of course Lunar Lander. What if, I thought, you took Lunar Lander and expanded the landscape into caves possibly five or six screens high. This idea soon ballooned with additional laser turrets, flying aliens and an actual aim to the game. At this point there was nothing to collect, that came a few days later.

With the basics now settled in my head and a few rough ideas on screen, it was time to start from scratch. I usually have a few different versions of a game kicking around in the early stages. Some have sprite ideas, some have layout ideas or background graphic tests. Using these, I cherry pick the best bits from each and added them to the new, empty shell.

First came the main ship. I had a few designs for this, but opted for the larger one seen in the game. The next task was to get the flames to appear out of the bottom.

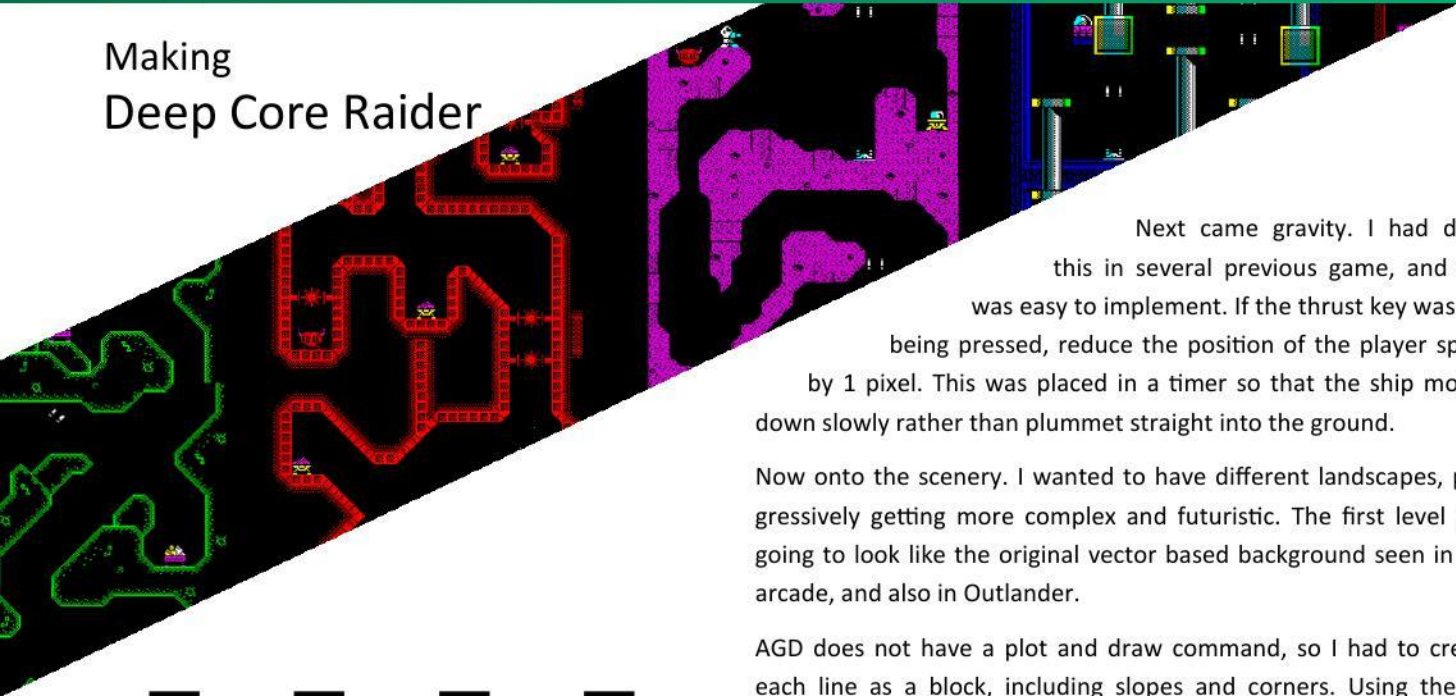
Adding some flames

For this I needed another sprite to represent the flames. To position them correctly I took the X and Y coordinates of the player ship, added 16 to the X coordinates (AGD uses X for the vertical position) and placed the flames there if the thrust key was pressed. The flames are placed off screen if the thrust key is not pressed.



FEATURE

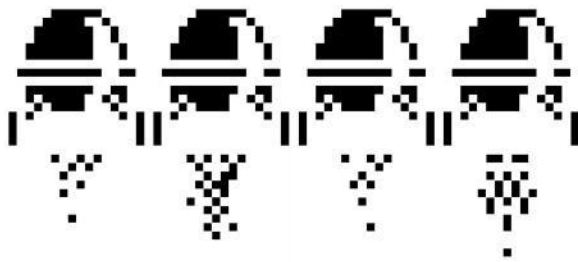
Making Deep Core Raider



Next came gravity. I had done this in several previous game, and this was easy to implement. If the thrust key was not being pressed, reduce the position of the player sprite by 1 pixel. This was placed in a timer so that the ship moved down slowly rather than plummet straight into the ground.

Now onto the scenery. I wanted to have different landscapes, progressively getting more complex and futuristic. The first level was going to look like the original vector based background seen in the arcade, and also in Outlander.

AGD does not have a plot and draw command, so I had to create each line as a block, including slopes and corners. Using these I could then begin to build up the levels of the first planet.



Slopes and landing

Another early decision was whether to destroy the player ship on contact with the ground or not. I could see the added challenge if the ship was destroyed, but I wanted to be able to allow the player to land, so they could plan the next move and take a rest, and also be able to slide down slopes.

To make the ship slide down the slopes I used two special blocks available within AGD, the Deadly block and the Custom block. Drawing these as left and right hand slopes meant I could detect when the player ship was in contact with them, and move the ship down and left (or right) 1 pixel.

In practice this worked fine and the player ship could slide down the slopes un-aided. The downside was that any coloured alien sprites that were not the same as the blocks, would potentially change the colour of that block.

With the first screen in place the next task was to implement a fuel limit and refill options.

Fuel limitations

As the player uses the thrust to navigate around the caves, they will use fuel. To implement this I used a variable for the fuel and if the

```
IF KEY 3
  IF H > 0
    LET D = 1
    IF CANGROUP
      SPRITEUP
      SOUND 0
      IF G = 0
        IF H <> 0
          SUBTRACT 1 FROM H
          BEEP 20
        ENDIF
      ENDIF
    ENDIF
  ENDIF
ENDIF
ENDIF
ENDIF
```

Thrust key pressed.. Now do all this stuff...

H = fuel

D= toggle to draw flame

G=timer



Fuel pod made up of 6 blocks.

thrust key was pressed, reduce the value by one. I had to put this on yet another timer to stop the fuel zooming down to zero in a few seconds. After a bit of tweaking with the timer, I was happy that it gave the player enough time to get through several caves until a refill was required.

To refill the players fuel I would need a refill point, and so after a few minutes in the block editor I had knocked together a little fuel pod. The next problem was how to implement the actual refuelling. I could use sprites, but that would mean using one of the sprite types, which I didn't want to commit to at this point. I could use Objects, but these were going to be used for the items to collect. I could use code to detect the object number, but that soon gets messy.

Having used the Deadly and Custom blocks for the slopes, I had to get a little bit creative. I used the ladder block! There are methods in AGD that detect if the player is above or below a ladder block, so using that I could check if the player was connected to the refuel pod. If they were, and the fuel was less than the upper fuel limit, their fuel would be replenished.

Getting the swag

Collection of objects in AGD is pretty much done for you, and using a few lines of code allows you easily to pick up objects.

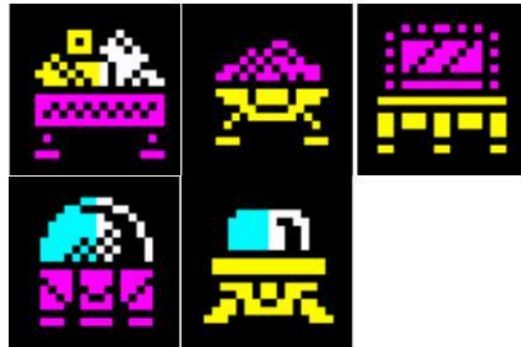
In the case of Deep Core Raider, these would be the booty that earned you points. Each planet would have it's own type of object with different graphics and colours. Because objects use the standard paper/ink colours, they cannot be defined to be multi-coloured. Instead you have to have empty blocks with the required colours set, placed underneath the object. The down side is they remain in place when you pick up the object. You can get rid of them using PUTBLOCK, but again it soon gets messy.

A quick blast in the object editor and I had my first collectable object. Placing it on screen is easy, and with a few lines of code, the player could now grab it and score some points.

Now for some more things designed to make your journey a bit more difficult, laser cannons...

```
IF LADDERBELOW
  IF H <= 29
    BEEP 200
    LET H = 30
  ENDIF
ENDIF
```

Simple fuel refill code cunningly using
A ladder to detect positioning.



The Swag

Each item is an Object 16 x 16 pixels.

Colour is added by using empty blocks with different
ink colours.

```
DETECTOBJ
IF OBJ <> 255
  GET OBJ
  SOUND 2
  SCORE 10
ENDIF
```

Simple code to collect the items
and earn some points.

The GET OBJ line removes the object
from the screen.

FEATURE

Making Deep Core Raider

The game needed a bit more peril, something nasty that could kill you before you knew what was happening, and so the laser cannon was invented.

I wanted various types of laser cannon, horizontal, vertical and diagonal. Horizontal and vertical, if they are not fast, are easy to navigate past, so I wanted to make them fast. The diagonal are a little more taxing. Trying to judge the angle somehow adds that extra little twist that I like.

The first of the lasers to be implemented was the diagonal firing. Using four separate blocks, I drew a laser base graphic and placed it on screen two.

I drew some sprite missiles and placed them next to the cannon and headed off into the code to make it fly.

Zap, Pow, Boom!

The missiles are a sprite type that move up and right until it hits something, usually the landscape, and then gets its X and Y coordinates reset back to the original starting point. This gives the impression of continual firing, and with the added effect of a small explosion when it hits something, the illusion is complete.

Because I wanted a different laser effect for the horizontal cannons, I had to use another sprite type, because only sprites can be used with AGD's LASER command. A few minutes in the sprite editor and the laser cannon was ready to be tested. I placed in on screen and in the code area, added a check for a timer before issuing the LASER 1 command, which made the cannon fire a laser to the right.

Vertical lasers meant for some more sneakiness and the re-use of the diagonal missile. The laser cannon is again just graphic blocks and the missiles do the same thing, move, hit scenery, explode, reset. However the missile sprite was diagonal, which looked stupid moving upward, so I added another frame of animation, and set that for screens with vertical firing. That is why you will never see vertical and diagonal cannons at the same time.

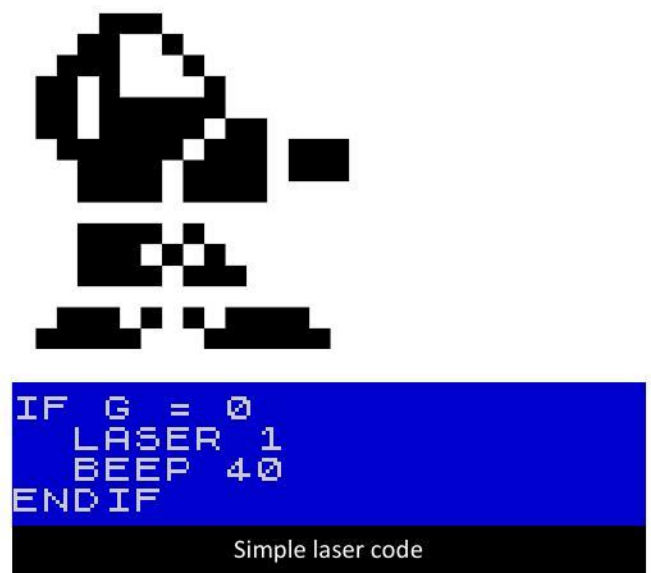
The addition of a few sound effects for explosions and the work was complete. I add the collision code later to allow for testing, but that is just 3 lines of code for each sprite that can kill the player.



Laser cannons prepared and ready



Making the missiles fly



Simple laser code

With the lasers complete the next thing to tackle was the mines. I wanted something that the player could blow up to allow movement to other areas or to get access to fuel pods. The design of this item changed several times, originally being a brick wall, but eventually ending up as a red mine.

This single frame sprite can be placed anywhere on a screen and needs the player to bomb it. So the obvious next thing would be to implement the bombing routine.

I drew a quick spinning bombs and added code to allow the player ship to spawn this sprite type when the fire key was pressed, and there was no other bomb already in existence.

The spite type would move downward until it hit something, either the landscape or another sprite. Either way it would then explode and be removed from the screen.

I added a few lines of code to the mine sprite to check it if had been hit by the bomb, and to remove it if it had.

What else can I blow up?

Now I could blow things up, I drew a few flying aliens to be used as a moving obstacle. These would be spawned from a static sprite and bounce around the screen. AGD already provide this movement as a code template, so all I had to do was draw the sprite and add code to spawn a set number based on how many were on screen and a timer. These timers are very useful!

In later levels I introduce walking robots, these originally could be blown up, but I removed this to make the game a little bit harder. These usually can be found on platforms with low ceilings so the player has to manoeuvre around them.

The next task was to now invent all of the levels. Each with different graphics, different layouts and different challenges. This is the best part of any game for me, creating tiny worlds that others can explore.

As I reached the memory limit of AGD, I had a bit of fun and added a screen near then end with a nice surprise.

The loading screen is usually the last part of the process before everything is put together in TAP format, testing and then released to the public.

I hope you enjoy the game!



GAME REVIEWS



Firebird 1988

"War has never been so much fun!" - sorry, wrong game. In G.I. Hero war isn't funny. On the contrary, it's a little boring. The storyline is quite standard: important NATO documents were stolen and you are sent to retrieve them (it's cheaper to send one soldier than an army - or at least the squad - isn't it?). But you are not on your own because a sidekick was sent with you - a dog called Killer (and he really is a killer). Unfortunately you were separated and your first task is to find your friend. When this is done you must complete two more tasks. First: locate the helicopter base and destroy it. Second: find the enemy camp and kill the leader.

G.I. Hero at first sight looks like a shoot'em up. You walk through the jungle, shoot enemy soldiers and try not to be shot by them.



But there is also a little bit of arcade adventure, because you can use a menu with few options. It allows you to reload your gun, use a torch (useful in dark dungeons), set/detonate mines and decipher encrypted messages.

The pace of the game isn't fast, most of the time you walk and try not to get lost. There are many locations in G.I. Hero, but they look very similar, and it's not easy to get where you want to. A map or at least a compass would be handy, but they are absent.

Players who like games where you are in a maze and have to find a way out will find G.I. Hero playable, but others can be put off. It's a shame because this game



could be a lot better. Just few tweaks like extra screens (for example with waterfall, distant mountains or a monument to tell the player that an important place is near) and a compass would make G.I. Hero easier and more playable.

In its present form it's not a bad game - the graphics are large, colourful and detailed (animation of the dog is excellent), music at the beginning is very good and in-game sound effects are OK. But in my opinion the difficulty level was set too high and G.I. Hero requires a lot of time and patience.

If you are a fan of maze games try G.I. Hero and you'll probably like it. If you prefer more action and shooting you probably will be bored.

Review by: Piotr "PopoCop" Szymanski

Anyone who watches the show will know how much I like shoot-em-ups, and any new game that comes along is always top the list for me.

Here then is ZX Destroyer released in 2014 by Retro Bytes.

This is an old-school shooter that's hard as nails, well it is for me at least.

The action is fast and furious and a mix between the classic Galaxian and even more classic Space Invaders. I don't really have to explain how this kind of game works, shoot things and try not to get blown up, but this game could do with being a bit easier to start with.



The alien bombs are tricky to avoid and always seem to know where the player is going to be, the intelligence must have improved since the 80's when their bombs were predictable and easy to dodge. Instead this new breed move at all angles that are most of the time very unpredictable.

The graphics are colourful, but because of this, are not tremendously smooth. The speed of the game though means you don't really notice the movement, being too engaged with the challenge of staying alive for longer than two minutes!

Sound is used well with some nice effects and control is responsive, which is good thing in this game.

I played this for a while and never managed to get very far, but this didn't deter me. It's the kind of pick up and play game I like. No complex back story, no intro, just lots of shooting.

Great fun if you're a fan of shooters.



Retro Bytes 2014



Give this one a try.

GAME REVIEWS

SUPER HANG-ON



Super Hang-on was released in the arcades by Sega in 1987 and was the ancestral successor to Pole Position in many players' eyes.

Replacing the car of the aforementioned racer, with a motorbike, and providing a near full sized sit-on bike in some versions, this soon became a firm favourite with race fans.

There were four tracks, each progressively harder, and the usual time limit restrictions to beat.

The arcade game featured beautiful graphics and excellent playability, so how would the Spectrum version compare?



Obviously not having the graphics hardware of the arcade, the Spectrum version still manages to deliver a very playable game. The four songs from the arcade are not available, in fact there is no music other than during the track selection stage.

The game is a multi-load, starting with the easiest track, even on 128k machines. Although the game works on 128k machine, the sound remains the same regardless of which machine you run it on too.

Once loaded you get a pretty bad tune and an indicator showing you which track you are about to race on, then it's time to race.

Control can be via keyboard or various joysticks and you get an option to change the sensitivity. The feeling is different from the smooth analogue arcade controls, but you soon get used to it.

The arcade easy track can be ridden with hardly a touch of the brake, and this is mostly true of the Spectrum version. However I do think the Spectrum version is harder. Having got quite far on



the arcade version, I struggling with the Speccy one.

In fact I had real trouble completing the first stage, which led to frustration, especially having just played and thoroughly enjoyed the arcade version.

If you over do the speed or are not in a good place to take corners, you have to brake, this means that riders behind you continually crashed into you meaning you are slowed down even more, it was like a vicious circle at times.

The graphics are well drawn and look like their arcade counterparts. They move smoothly and give a nice sensation of movement and speed. The bike tilts as you take

corners and should you crash, there is a nice animation.

Sound, as mentioned already, consists of just the engine sound with a few effects for skidding and crashing. It does miss the music though, and is better played with some appropriate songs in the background.

Playability wise , it falls behind the arcade machine due to the increased difficulty, despite playing for over an hour, I never managed to get past the beginners track, slightly embarrassing.

The arcade machine also had a turbo button if you hit a certain speed, and using this gave you a turbo boost. This is replicated in The Spectrum version and has to be used if you want to get far in the game.

Once your speed gets to 180kph, the indicator turns red meaning you can now use the turbo. This increases your speed, but you have to be careful where and when you use it or you can easily end up flying off the track in tight corners.

Overall quite a nice racer, but I think the difficulty could have been dialled down a bit, especially as there are other tracks to play and they didn't have to squeeze everything into a single load.

If you like racers, you'll probably like this one...

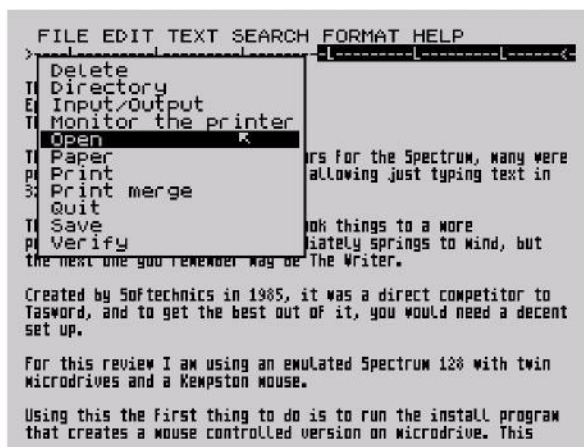
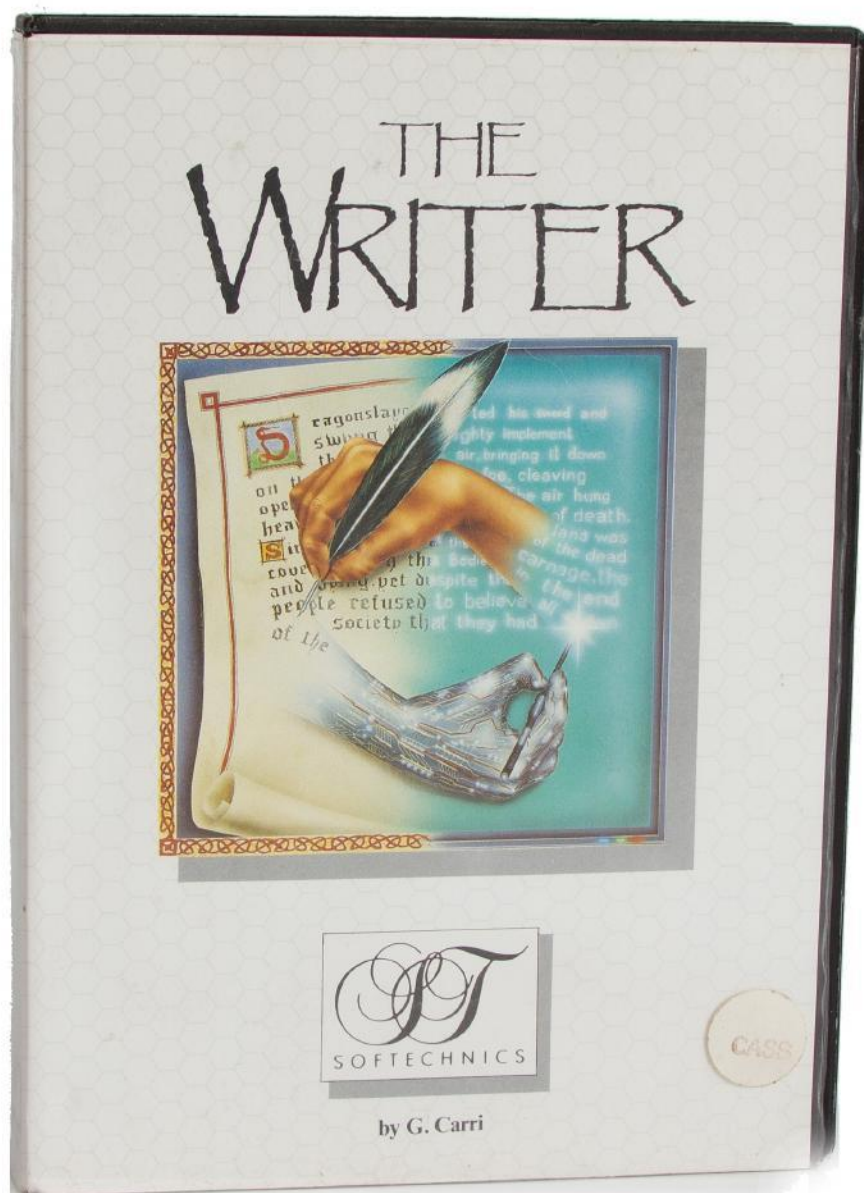


CLASSIC INLAYS

Schizoids

This inlay holds many memories for me. It was probably the one that made me look more closely at game artwork too. For me it was stunning and let the imagination run wild as to what the game was about.

Sadly the game was terrible, and a very poor follow-up to Arcadia.



The Written WORD

Professional word processing on the Spectrum

There were a lot of word processors for the Spectrum, many were poor with minimal functionality, allowing just typing text in 32-character mode, giving very basic editing choices and if you were lucky, printing. There were however, a few that took things to a more professional level, Tasword immediately springs to mind, but the next one you may think of could be The Writer.

Created by Softechnics in 1985, it was a direct competitor to Tasword, and to get the best out of it, you would need a decent set up. For this review I am using an emulated Spectrum 128 with twin Microdrives and a Kempston mouse.

Using this setup, the first thing to do is run the install program. This creates a mouse controlled version on Microdrive. The install process takes about 6 minutes to complete, but once finished, you can start using what is, a very good word processor.

The base colour scheme is white ink on black paper, but I prefer the opposite, so with few clicks of the mouse, I configured things.

Yes a mouse. That's not something you say very often when talking about the Spectrum, but using the setup mentioned previously, controlling the program is a weird feeling at first.

FILE EDIT TEXT SEARCH FORMAT HELP

The Spectrum Show

It's a Spectrum, but you are using a mouse and drop down menus.

Let's start from the beginning, and creating a new file. You don't, as with modern computers, write you text and then save it. If you do, you can't select the location or the name. Instead you first select OPEN, then enter a name, and then which Microdrive you want to use. This will create an empty file ready to work on.

Now it's time to start writing your masterpiece. The screen displays your text in 64 characters, so you get a good idea of how the final document will look when printed. It also looks very professional and is easy to read.

From this point on, you type away and soon you will be using the drop down menus to format and modify your work. Let's take a quick trip through the menus to give you some idea of the power that this program offers. To use the menus, you simply right click on the mouse and the menus appear at the top of the screen.

The FILE menu has options to delete files or get a directory of files on Microdrive. You can switch saving to tape and change control to joystick. You can OPEN, PRINT, QUIT and VERIFY. The usual familiar options.

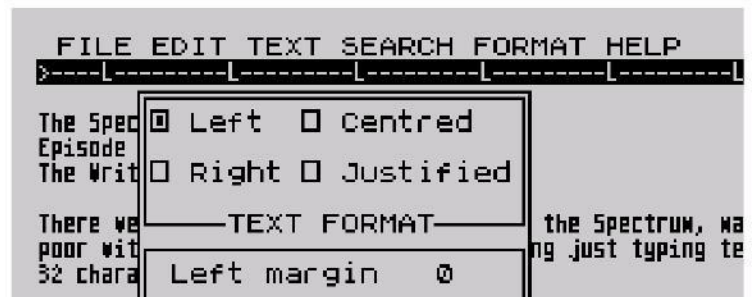
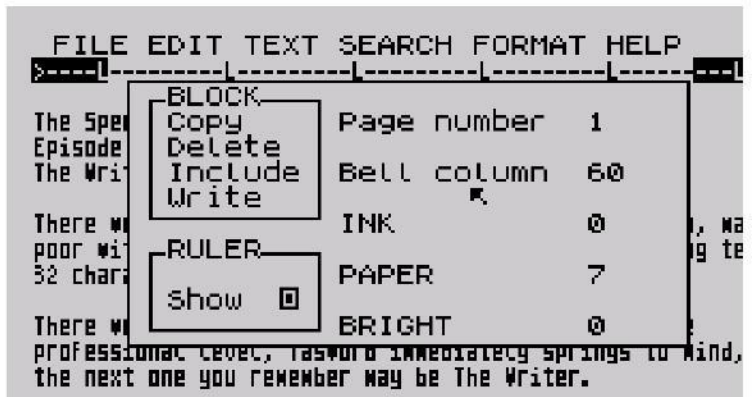
The EDIT menu provides block functions and program options.

The TEXT menu gives you formatting options.

The SEARCH menu gives you a find/replace tool.

The FORMAT menu gives you numbering and header and footer settings.

The HELP menu provide what it says. There are numerous and very verbose help files stored on Microdrive, all ready to assist if you can't be bothered to get out the manual. The manual is, as you would expect, very large and very comprehensive. Covering all aspects of the



program and giving examples.

In operation everything is very smooth, and to make sure it provided the experience required by professionals back in 1985, I typed out this full review direct into the emulator. I had no problems at all, and I was very impressed with The Writer. The menus were sometimes a bit clunky, but it wasn't long before I was using the options without thinking. The only omission is a spell checker.

The mouse pointer wraps around the screen which can be a bit weird, and there are still some key command to use, for example to mark the start and end blocks. It's a pity these options were not included in the mouse operations. At one point I tried to use the scroll wheel on my mouse, which of course didn't work, but just goes to show how comfortable I was getting with the application.

Other options available include mail merge and using "include" files that can be merged into your existing documents.

Overall then, this is a great word processor, especially if you use it on the equipment it was designed for.

FRONK N STEIN

Frank N Stein was released by PSS in 1984 and is a platform game that does not have any jumping in it. This may sound strange, but the game was, and still is, an original twist on the genre.

The aim is simple, collect all the body parts required to build the monster and bring him to life by switching on the electricity. There are 50 screens of action, and each screen is completed separately. You control the professor who has to move around each screen collecting the parts.

Instead of jumping there are two methods of moving up and down. At various points there are small springs which can be used to bounce the professor to the platform above and poles that allow the professor to slide down to the platform beneath. Each one can only be used in one direction, so there is an element of strategy and planning required to complete each level.



There are also other things to watch out for like areas of ice that cause the professor to slide uncontrollably, and bulbs that give him a shock and stop him moving for a short amount of time and also slime that slows him down.

The platforms are patrolled by numerous enemies ranging from hypodermic needles, snakes and spiders, these of course have to be avoided.

As he walks over the body parts, they appear at the top of the screen and slowly build up the monster. Once all have been collected, then the switch has to be thrown to bring it to life.

If all this wasn't enough, there is a time limit for each level and this can be seen by the small meter slowly ticking up.

You also have to collect the parts in the right order so again you have to plan your route.

Some levels do not involve collecting parts, instead you have to just reach the switch at the top of the screen and these are very reminiscent of Donkey Kong with the monster throwing barrels at you. There are no ladders on these sections, instead you have teleports that take you to the level above, or in some cases to another area of the same level. Watching carefully how the barrels are directed downwards you will notice how this works and you can usually get to the top very easily.

Control can be by various joysticks or the keyboard and feels sharp, letting you concentrate on completing the level.

The graphics are well animated and very smooth and the sound is really nice with effects for walking as well as bouncing up and sliding down.

This is a great game, and surprisingly its actually compiled BASIC! The author has done a fabulous job of making this and play really well.

The original game also had bugs which meant level 25 could not be complete and some levels crashed



randomly. Personally I could never get that far so these problems never effected me!

A new error free version was released in 2011 after the original source was released by the author, fixed and then re-compiled.

I recommend giving this a try, I enjoyed it back in 1984, and still like to have some time with it.

A great all round game.

GAME REVIEWS

SPLAT!

Incentive Software 1983



Released in 1983, this original little maze game turned the genre on its head by having the maze move as well as the player. This gave a whole new angle and a whole new set of playing challenges.

You have to guide Zippy, a kind of animated cross, around the ever-moving maze collecting grass and avoiding water and spikes while at the same time trying not to get trapped by the walls and getting crushed.

The game relies on the players greed to collect as many points as they can and taking risks in the hope that the maze doesn't change direction at the crucial point.

The level is completed when a counter hits 100% and you are met with zippy shouting 'Yippeeee' at you, using very effective speech synthesis.

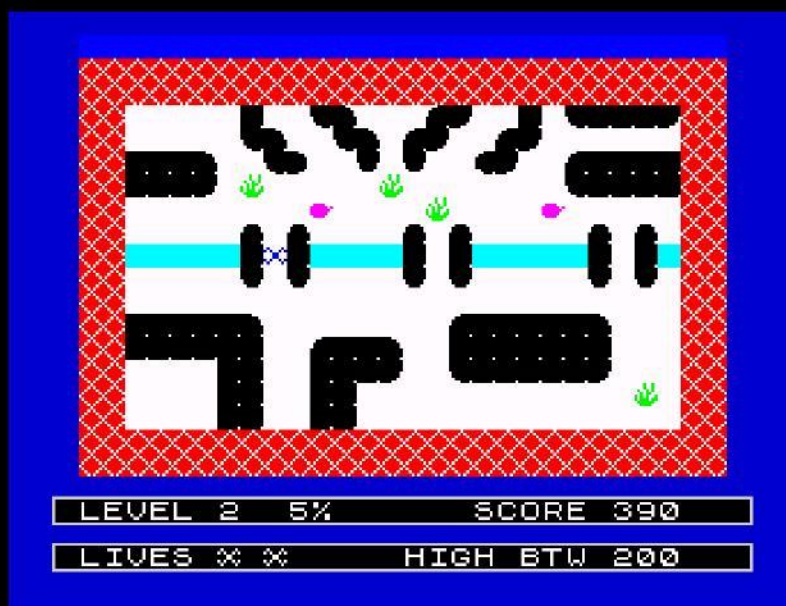
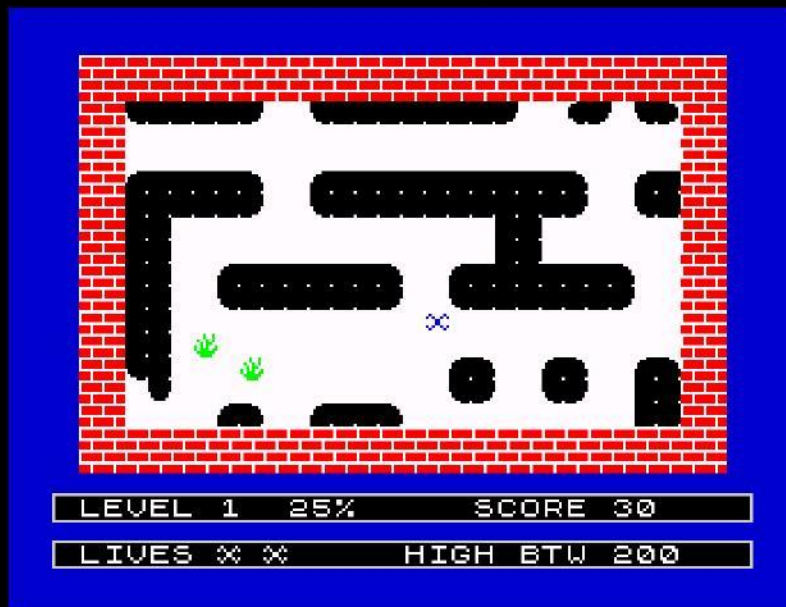
The levels get harder as the game progresses with the addition of rivers and other obstacles to watch out for, including some invisible ones!

This game is arguably the first game to offer a prize of £500, and the winner would be the person who got the highest score. To stop cheating the game had a high score validation system too. The winner was 17-year-old James Tant, who scored 112,930 in case you wanted to see how you can compare.

This is a great little game that is both challenging and enjoyable, and has that just one more go factor.

Once you get crushed for being a little too greedy, you want to have another go recognising how stupid you were and promising yourself not to make the same mistake again – inevitably you do. Which keeps you coming back for more.

A great game.



ULTIMA RATIO

Firebird software 1987



The Earth is under threat from the most powerful weapon known – a massive 9 stage battle platform and to destroy it, a skilled pilot has to navigate each stage and destroy everything on it. Only then can he move to the next one to complete his mission. Yes, this game is a shoot-em-up... well a kind of shoot-all-round really and could be compared to a vertical Uridium.

You fly up and down the large colourful levels, blasting away at anything and everything, and that's the main problem with the game. There are no clear indicators of what to shoot and what to ignore, and this causes you to waste your limited ammo. The flying ships and aliens are all obvious targets, but there are blocks that just can't be destroyed and some that can. I guess after playing for a period of time you get to identify these, but I think it would have been better to mark them out more clearly.

There are other blocks that reverse your controls too, and there is no real reason for these other than to annoy you, as they serve no constructive purpose. If there had been areas only accessible when using reverse controls that would have made sense – kind of.

At the bottom of the level there is a block indicating you should fly over it to complete the stage, and you spend a lot of time flying over it hoping you have completed the level. However, when nothing happens, you have to head back through the screens trying to see what you missed. All this against a timer too, which is at least displayed on screen, unlike your ammo or shields..

If you run out of ammo you can refill by flying over a certain block, but the instructions don't say which one. Luckily I think I found it on one level, but when I tried it on the next it didn't work!

Once all of the aliens and blocks have been destroyed you can then fly over the end block and the next level begins. The action is much the same throughout; things to shoot, things to dodge and timers to watch.

The graphics are very colourful, and because of this, the screen does not scroll, instead it uses a screen by screen push scroll. Some blocks kill you instantly, which is bit unfair, and some blocks when shot remove the enemy for a period of time. Again, in the thick of battle it is difficult to tell which blocks you shot!

Sound in the game includes some nice effects.

Playability grows as you get to know what to shoot and what not to shoot but the gameplay is the same all the way through.

This is not a bad game really.. just not a great one...

FEATURE

THE [ALMOST] COMPLETE STORY OF COMPUTER MAGAZINES 1978 TO 2009 Part 2

Lets get serious...

What Micro launched in June 1982 and gave us a very serious publication covering all aspects of home computing.

Again this proved to be very heavy reading with top end business computers and peripherals taking the main space. Home micros did get a mention in amongst the Apricots, Compaqs, Einsteins and Adams... and there were even game reviews, albeit very stern and professional. Not only that, but even type-in games made an appearance.

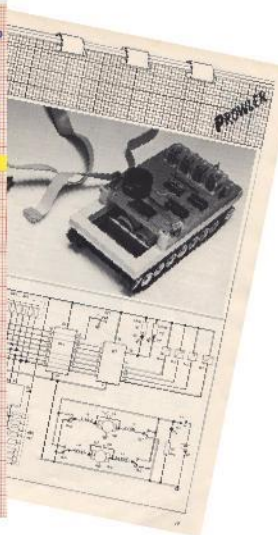
In August 1982, *Personal Computing Today* arrive on the shelves, and straight away you could tell it was aimed at the home user.

Inside, this multi-format magazine covered all the major micros including the Commodore, Oric, Atari, Memotech, Jupiter and of course the ZX81 and Spectrum.

There was the usual news pages, type-in games and letters pages as well as special features looking at different aspects of the micro world, including hardware and computer reviews.

Games were high on the agenda too, with software reviews for all the micros and a handy scoring system. They did show game covers, but hardly any screenshots.





There was a good technical sections for readers to ask questions, and a peripheral section too. This magazine seemed to cover everything, there was even a micro comparison section.. so you could see how your computer matched up to the competition.

At the end of 1982 came *Sinclair Projects*.

A risky diversion into hardware related features and D.I.Y. electronics, almost heralding back to the early ZX80 days.

There was a news section too that mainly covered hardware, and a letters section. Aimed at a small percentage of users, this magazine was short lived.

More room on the shelf

As 1983 arrived so did more magazines. It seemed there was still shelf space for more.

Personal Computer News arrived in March, a new brash and bright weekly, multi-format publication.

Having more pages than the other weekly mag, *Popular Computing Weekly*, it covered a lot more across the same micro based collection.

News, letters, hardware features, special features like the one on the Spectrum from June 1983 showing the original design of the Microdrive. Game reviews had a novel scoring system, and split the score into separate sections for appeal, playability, use of machine and an overall score.

The magazine also had type-in listings. Each month they published part of a program so to complete it, you had to buy the next few issues, very cunning.

The magazine covered not only home micros but business machines as well, and going in depth into the peripherals and how they worked, all very interesting.

Competing with this and *Popular Computing Weekly* came *Home Computing Weekly* in the same month! Featuring much the same content and looking in many cases identical to PCW, some issues had saucy ladies on the cover, reflecting the attitude at the time.

It was also one of the first magazine to give scores for individual aspects of a game and had special interviews with companies, it also got one of the very few interviews with Ultimate Play The Game at the height of their fame.



FEATURE

Release the gaming mags...

Gaming was now becoming big business and in June 1983 we got another multi-format magazine, the short lived *Personal Computer Games*.

Aimed, as the title suggests, at gamers, the contents focus was games reviews. The magazine also had news, hardware features, and type-ins.

Later the style was slightly tweaked, copying *Crash* and giving multiple opinions in game reviews.

In the same month *TV Gamer* was launched, again mainly aimed at gamers, more specifically though, console gamers. It covered Atari, Vectrex, Intellivision and Collecovision, the top manufacturers of the day. Later it also included the home micros with game reviews (very short ones) and the usual news.

It also borrowed an idea from *Computer and Video Games* by covering arcade games too.

One article that made me chuckle was one entitled, "The Sinclair Computers – the Spectrum is tested to see if it can be a potential games playing system". This was from April 1984 by which time the Spectrum had long since been established as a brilliant gaming system.

Another Spectrum magazine

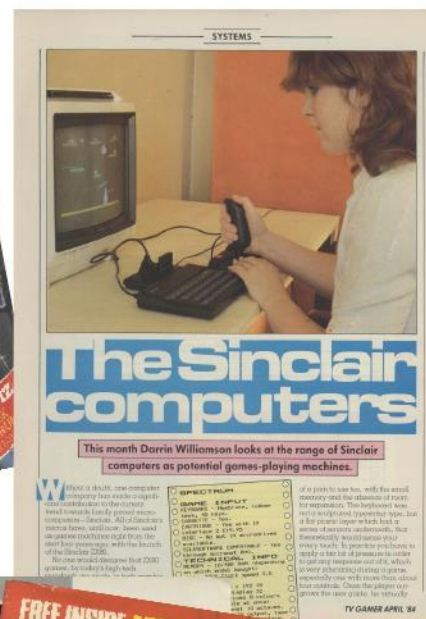
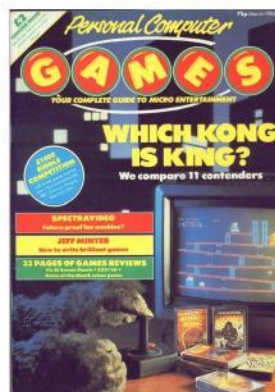
With the Spectrum at the top of the pile, 1984 started with a dedicated magazine, *Your Spectrum*.

Launched in January this relatively small magazine gave us pretty much everything a Speccy user could want.

There were machine code tutorials, news, special features, saucy lady (ok only in one issue), programming tips and game reviews. It was a welcome addition to the shelves and soon began to grow in popularity.

Issue 2 had a giant poster of Ant Attack and a competition that I and many others entered, and completely failed to win! They did make a bit of a gaff though by saying details would be in two newspapers, and they only put them in one!

Your Spectrum quickly gained a large following, with its



How others saw the Spectrum

While creating this feature, and when reading old magazines in general, it is very interesting to see how opinions varied from publication to publication. As Spectrum users we are sometimes blinkered in our views and because magazines aimed at non-Spectrum hardware were rarely seen, we missed what other people thought.

Some magazines, especially the more serious types, often looked down on the humble, rubber-keyed marvel because it couldn't, at least then, help your business with spreadsheets.

Game focused magazines, especially the ones for consoles (or as they called them back then, TV Games) also tended to ignore the Sinclair machine as it wasn't a proper games machine, after all, it had a keyboard! This though was not lost on the games mags, with comments like "It has a keyboard but it's by no means brilliant."

They tended also to sneer at the masses of software titles available, thinking that because few were from "well known" companies, and by that they meant Atari, Colecovision or other console providers, that they were somehow second rate.

Some even go as far as suggesting the games player steer clear of the Sinclair machine and go for something a bit more standard like the Atari range.

Sometimes entire articles seem written in a way to pretend to give a fair opinion, but in fact you can tell they are not interested in covering the format. Maybe because it would mean extra work for them! Compared to the consoles, the volume of releases for the Spectrum towered over it's rivals, and how would they possibly cope with all those games?

Best stick to one or two a month then.. Anyway, the Spectrum won't have a long life span. Just look at the ZX81, where is that now?

great mix of technical and non-technical content.

They even created a new BASIC programming language, Mega-Basic, that gave programmers a lot of new features, not that I can recall anything ever being published using it.

Game reviews came courtesy of the Joystick Jury, three people who offered their own opinions of the game, giving a much wider view, and this helped readers pick out their next purchase. Not everyone likes the same game styles, so having different people review them, did at least try to avoid biased views.

Realising that having a magazine just for the Spectrum, and with the name 'Spectrum' in the title, could limit the magazine's life, the publishers decided to change the name, and so in January 1986 and *Your Sinclair* was launched.

The content was re-styled and sadly it looked to have been done by the same people who re-booted *Sinclair User*. It felt much more adolescent focused with supposedly funny photographs and witty writing. The whole focus moved from being a good mix of technical, serious and game content to a more laid back youth magazine.



FEATURE

There was even a gossip column, T'Zers, and when it became clear it was a female writer, many a young lad went into spasms, and the magazine played up to this.

There was a news section, called Frontlines, although containing relevant information, had a bit of a messy layout. The game reviews were average, and if any game was deemed to be good enough, it was given the MEGA-GAME award. The reviews themselves often slipped into adolescent humour or pun throwing contests, although the scoring system was easy enough to understand and could be used without reading all of the drivel.

There were special features and interviews but again, they thought it clever to ask stupid question.

Like several other magazines, they also had a few cartoon strips including Wally Monthly and a smaller one, Doodlebugs.

There was a section called Trainspotters where readers wrote in with the errors and mistakes from previous issues and an adventure section penned by Mike Gerrard.

Much of the content has interjections from the editor, which soon became annoying, at least to me. (well I like it – Ed) but a lot of the younger Spectrum owners seemed to enjoy.

At least the magazine had a good hacking section, giving players the means to cheat at games, but even this didn't escape the childish writing sadly.

Another new feature was previews, or as they called them, Future Shocks. Something that would come back to haunt almost every Spectrum magazine. Games were previewed, based usually on incomplete or demo code, or in some cases just screen shots. The reviewer would claim it to be fantastic and lavishing compliments on it, and then, when the game finally came out, if it ever did, it was usually crap.

Your Sinclair continually changed their image and styling, the pages got more splashes of colour, sometimes making it hard to read the text, and the writing style continued.

As the games released dwindled, so did the number of pages and they even started to cover the SAM, but the last issue finally arrived and the back page said it all. "Our work here is done"

Even this wasn't the end for *Your Sinclair*. In 2004 Retro Gamer magazine released a tribute issue, issue 94.

The style of main Spectrum magazines tended to split the play-





ground. some preferring serious, well informed and written articles of *Sinclair User* and *ZX Computing*, others the more relaxed and jokey style of *Your Sinclair*, but there was a new kid on the block, and he was about to take them all on.

New kid on the block

February 1984 saw the release of *Crash*.

Initially a mail order catalogue with a few reviews, this new behemoth pounced on the market with its brilliant covers and masses of well written reviews. It was a games mag through and through, with pages and pages and reviews for both old games and new releases across the many different game styles. The reviews were well written, informative and concise and many gamers used the reviews to decide their next purchase.

They went into more depth with separate scores for different aspects of the game and large screen shots, they also introduced the Crash Smash, a game, or number of games they deemed to be the best for that month. Some software companies even used that in their advertising.

The range of software encompassed every aspect of computer use from arcade, adventure and strategy games through to education and business use. Hardware got mentioned now and again too with features about printers or disc drives..

With all these games they just had to have a playing tips section, with pokes, hints and game maps to help the needy player. This section often took up several pages in itself. They had a news section and special features like company profiles and interviews, much the same as other magazines at the time, but somehow they did it better. It wasn't childish, it wasn't too technical, they wrote for the average user and the users responded, making *Crash* the best selling Spectrum magazine.

It wasn't perfect, as like *Your Sinclair*, it often featured previews and was sometimes accused of giving higher scores to games in exchange for advertising.

They had several long running comic strips, The Terminal Man and Jetman, and they even had a serialised novel-like story Tamara Knight (written by Mel Croucher of Automata UK)

The styling and format drifted only slightly, no large scale changes like the others, and this seemed to keep the magazine in favour. It did however drift over to the *Your Sinclair* side of the fence as it's days grew numbered, which was a shame, especially for such a well put together publication.

Continued next issue...



GRUMPY OGRE'S

Adventure Page

Welcome one and all to Grumpy Ogre's Adventure Page, a place where magic (and plenty of other strange things) happen.

In this first instalment I will be taking a look at some very early adventure games, the first is Adventure A, Planet Of Death from Artic Computing. This little 16k gem was one of the first adventure games I bought, and I played it for ages, trying every possible command before I mastered it. And even then I needed guidance from 16/48 magazine.

This text only game sees you trying to escape from the Planet of Death using the standard two word commands. The parser is fast though, allowing you to try out many alternatives in quick succession, and has some quirks if you dig deep enough. There are times when the first word is ignored and the second word triggers the event - try it!

```
I AM IN A DENSE FOREST
THERE IS A ROPE HANGING FROM ONE
TREE
OBVIOUS EXITS ARE SOUTH AND WEST
TELL ME WHAT TO DO
CUT ROPE
HOW?
TELL ME WHAT TO DO
USE FLINT
IT HAS FALLEN TO THE FLOOR
TELL ME WHAT TO DO
```

The location descriptions are short, often only a single sentence, but then again, this is a 16k game. This does however, make mapping easier.



This game features a nasty prison cell very reminiscent of the Hobbit's Goblin dungeon. The way out is not obvious though and involves looking in a specific direction and handing out some violence to what you see!

There are a few unfair deaths in this game so save often, and if in doubt, kill anything you come across quickly. It is very frustrating to be walking around trying to find a key only to be randomly strangled by the small green man.

There are also elements that when triggered, mean a world of pain. Pushing the wrong buttons at the end of the game will cause the lift to fuse, and even using hints from the internet, I could not repair it. So that meant starting all over again.

The puzzles are, mostly logical, although having to dance through a force field holding a mirror in the later part of the

```
I AM IN A QUIET CAVERN
THERE ARE EXITS WEST, EAST AND
SOUTH
I CAN ALSO SEE :
A MIRROR
A SMALL GREEN MAN SLEEPING ON
THE MIRROR
TELL ME WHAT TO DO
```

game is a bit obscure!

Once you know what to do, this is a very short game, probably taking you less than two minutes to complete, but the fun is finding that solution.

```
I AM IN THE LIFT CONTROL ROOM
THERE ARE THREE SWITCHES ON THE
WALL. THEY ARE ALL OFF
A SIGN SAYS : 5,4 NO DUSTY BIN
RULES
THE EXIT IS EAST
TELL ME WHAT TO DO
```

For the new adventurer though it soon becomes annoying to find yourself in the prison cell yet again by simply walking in the wrong direction. Many locations have exits that lead directly to the cell. Even when you know how to get out, you still have to type the commands in again and again.

The game is not bug free either, you can continually get the rope after you have cut it down!

For me this was a nice trip down memory lane, and I still remember sat in a company van, reading the inlay and waiting to get back to work so I could clock out and go home.

The next game I loaded up was Zolan by Softek. This is also a 16k game but gives a completely different experience to Planet of

Death.

Your task is to find the lost treasures of Zolan, a once great emperor.

The start appears to be very familiar. You are outside a small hut, inside which are some keys, a troch, some water and a wand.

As soon as you start playing however, the game soon goes downhill. The location descriptions give no indication of possible exits, so you have to type each direction at each location before you find your way around.

You are then thrown into a maze - the thing most adventurers hate, and this one is no different.

Finally you get to a small grate and can descend into the caves, but things are dark down there so you need some light. TURN ON TORCH failed, so did USE TORCH, and after entering the wrong command you are instantly killed! Very bad practice for adventure games. I eventually found you had to use ON.

Continuing to explore I found many familiar locations, but somehow there was no excitement, the descriptions were bland and most of the time the game redrew the screen losing your command history.

Upon finding a pit, I climbed down to be faced by a snake. Any thing I did then seemed to kill me!

```
YOU ARE IN THE FOREST
YOU ARE IN THE FOREST
YOU ARE OUTSIDE THE SMALL HUT
YOU ARE IN A STEEP VALLEY
YOU ARE BY A LITTLE STREAM
YOU ARE IN A SMALL CLEARING
JUST TO ONE SIDE OF IT YOU CAN
SEE A TUNNEL GOING DOWN INTO
THE EARTH. IT IS COVERED BY A
LOCKED GRATE
```

THE GRATE IS NOW OPEN

TYPE IN COMMAND "G"

If you die, which you do frequently, the game stops with a BASIC stop message. To try again you have to RUN it.

Just as I was starting to enjoy it after finding the dagger (by going down from a location it wasn't obvious you could go down from), and killing the snake, the batteries in the torch failed and I got killed instantly. Very, very frustrating!

YOU JUST FELL INTO A PIT

YOU APPEAR TO BE DEAD

After many plays, many deaths and whole lot of pain, I gave up and reverted to the internet for some help. It seems you have to be very exact about where and when you use the torch, and very exact about your commands to avoid instant death. There is no room to try things out, which is what adventure games are about really.

Overall this game was a huge disappointment for me by not allowing you to try things out providing a very linear feel with the fun totally removed.

I will not be loading this up again, at least if my blood pressure is to remain stable so I can try more adventures next issue.

ZOLAN



GAME REVIEWS



R-Tape 2014

Sunbucket, released in 2014 by R-Tape kicks off with a great loading screen accompanied when the game loads with a cracking tune by Lee Spoons. Once loaded and you are in for a real treat, some great arcade platform action.

The idea is simple, switch all the light bulbs on by waking over them, avoid the evil enemies and for extra lives and bonuses collect the letters MOR and E in the correct order. Sound simple? Well it isn't.

There are 40 levels in total, and the design eases you into the gameplay, getting harder as you progress. Later levels introduce collapsing floors, wrap around screens, conveyor belts and vanishing platforms.

The graphics are excellent, and the game uses the Nirvana multi-colour engine to allow the Spectrum to display more colours per character square. This makes the game look superb.

The well animated characters move around smoothly and control is responsive. Sound is used well, and there are some humorous elements too, especially when you , or one of the chasing nasties take a plunge from a higher platform.

Occasionally one of the lightbulbs will switch off, so



you have to back track before you can complete the level. All this adds to the frantic gameplay, and gives us a highly addictive game.

Gameplay is fast, seeing you dashing around the screen, climbing ladders, dropping down spaces and reappearing at the top of the screen, all the time keeping track of those chasing enemies. With all this to content with, the game never become frustrating and you always want to get back and have another go.

If you lose all of your lives (or every ten levels) you will get a password that allows you to continue from your last level - so you don't have to play through all of the screens again, although completing all levels in one sitting adds to the challenge and will get you a higher score.

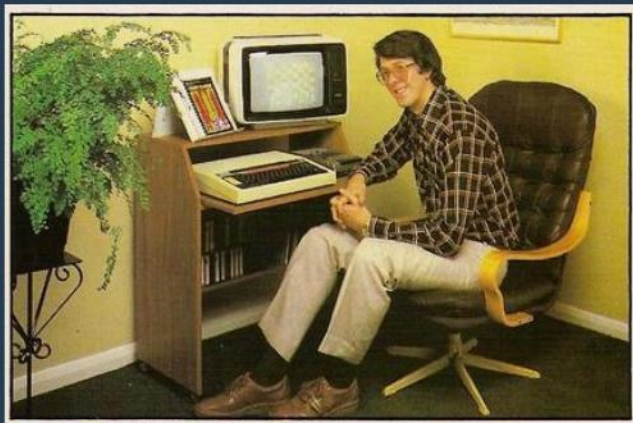
One element I likes was the crumbling floors, but unlike other games that have these, in this one, the enemies can also erode them, so with levels like that, you have to be quick to make sure you have got all the bulbs before the route becomes unusable.

All in this is an excellent game. Easy to play, great graphics and sound.. what more do you need.

Highly recommended.



THE SILLY BIT

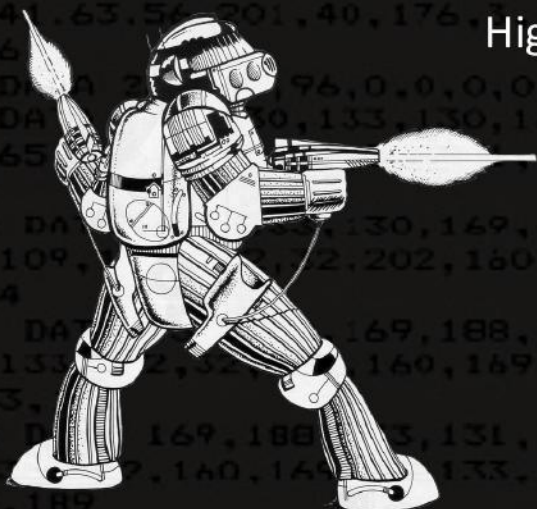


WARNING!

Using a BBC Micro can give you seriously massive legs!

TYPE-IN CORNER

Highlighting Games You May Have Missed



Game:	Carrots From Space
Magazine:	Your Computer Aug 85
Type:	Arcade
Author:	David Green

Appearing in Your Computer in 1985, this game included several machine code routines to improve speed and sound.

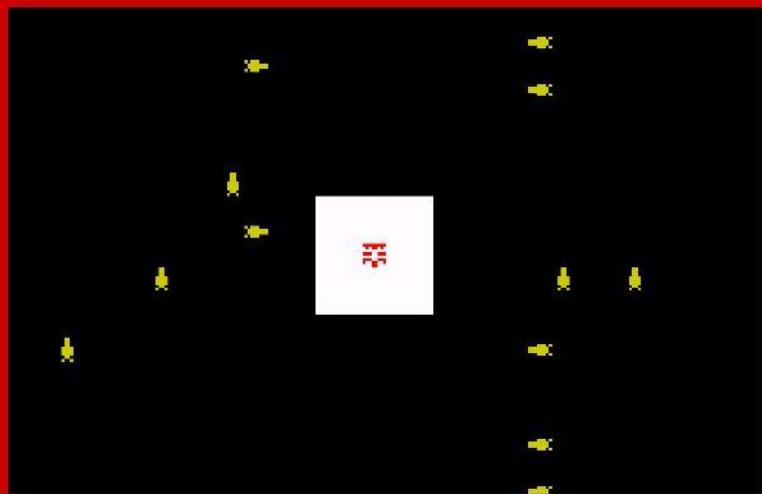
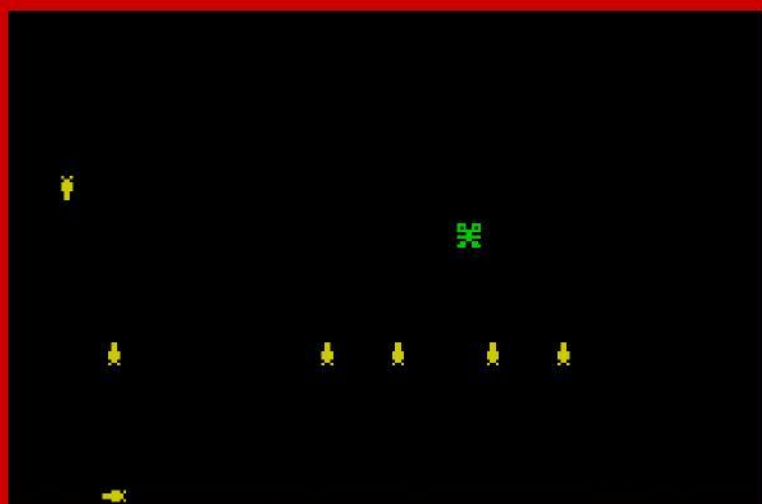
Don't be put off by the screenshots either, this is a very good and very addictive game that provides a tough challenge for the player.

You control the little monster that is caught in the middle of a massive carrot invasion. The evil vegetables appear en-mass and move vertically and horizontally on the screen, and not only do you have to avoid being hit, but also position yourself to drop bombs.

Once dropped, the bomb will explode after a certain period of time, and it is important to get the timing right so that it explodes just as the carrots are close.

The explosion takes up a few character squares and so can take out several carrots at a time.

Movement is smooth and unlike many type-in games, is in pixels rather than character squares. The sound too is improved using machine code, with some nice effects.



TANIUM

Players Software 1988

Being a retired hero doesn't sit well and you still yearn for the thrill of action. It doesn't take too long before you get your chance and are asked to go into battle once again.

Tanium is a horizontal scrolling shoot-em-up, but one that somehow misses the mark. The first thing you notice is the speed of your ship, it is very slow. This is a normal aspect of many such games and the first pick-up you go for is a speed-up. However, pick-ups in this game are only active for a short period of time, usually running out just when you need them.

The game play is rather dull and repetitive, and although many elements of good shooter are incorporated here, they do not fit together particularly well.

Enemies come in several guises from small fighters in formation to larger, glued together blocks that have to be destroyed individually. There are also solid walls with holes punched through that you have to fly through, rather like Flappy Bird.

The graphics look good, are well defined and move smoothly, and the minimal landscape adds that little bit extra. The colours change between each enemy type with your ship also doing the same, which can be a little off-putting.

Sound is non-existent on 48K machines, but on 128K versions you get firing and an explosion sound. The game also crashes on some versions of the 128k variations.

Control can be via joystick or keys, but the firing is linked to a counter that limits your shots. This means you can press the fire button and nothing happens until the counter is reached. The best policy I found was to keep the fire button held down!

It wasn't long before I got bored of this game. The slow pace, the boring movement patterns and the repetitiveness. Even as a fan of shooters, I found this one a little too pedestrian.

It needed more sounds, more movement patterns, more weapons and more playability.

Give it a try just make sure you feel the same way though, as we all like different things, but for me, this is a play-once game.



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